



The Amache National Historic Site Act (HR 2497)

Support for the *Amache National Historic Site Act* (HR 2497)

Bob Fuchigami, Amache survivor:

“I have waited many, many years to see the day where we can be certain that Amache, as a place of reflection, remembrance, honor, and healing, is protected for our current and future generations. President Biden’s signature on the Amache National Historic Site Act today brings me hope that we are finally closer to this certainty. My parents did not live to see this day. The time is not only right; it is long overdue.”

Ken Kitajima, Amache survivor:

“As a young boy at Amache, I never thought I’d see an America that cared about my story. I am now a 91 year old veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Thank you, President Biden, Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper, and Congressmen Neguse and Buck, for your leadership and for the great decisions made regarding Amache as a National Park Historic Site. Now signed by the President, long lasting U.S history is made.”

Min Tonai, Amache survivor:

“Many young men at Amache served in the U.S. Army, though their country incarcerated them for their Japanese ancestry. I was ten and incarcerated along with my mother and siblings at Amache, where I was also a boy scout. In 1943, our camp troop went to the Granada Railroad Station at four in the morning to see the young enlisted men off. Our scout commissioner told us to play as loud as we could. Years later, I served as a medic in the U.S. Army Korean War. In the 1980s, I worked to preserve Amache, organizing reunions and working on various preservation efforts. Thank you to President Biden for signing the Amache National Historic Act so that these efforts are not forgotten.”

Mike Honda, former Member of Congress and Amache survivor:

“Congressmen Neguse and Buck and Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper demonstrated what cooperation looks like on the Hill. With the bill now signed by President Biden, this is finally the expression and realization of the people's will.”

Carlene Tanigoshi Tinker, Amache survivor:

“As a former Amachean and as a volunteer for the Amache Field School, I have learned the importance of having Amache as a National Park unit, as it would illustrate the hardships and the perseverance of the incarcerated people. It would also point to the injustice of their being placed there, simply because of their ethnicity, not because of what they had done. Most importantly, it would signify the reasons that further groups, such as Muslims, should not be treated as were the Japanese Americans—there have been hints of this in current times.”



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Rosalyn Tonai, Amache descendant and Executive Director, National Japanese American Historical Society, Inc.

“As the niece and granddaughter of former incarcerated at Amache, and as a practitioner in the field of historic and cultural preservation, this bill resonates on both a personal and professional level. I cannot help but be moved by the power of place that Amache holds for our families whose stories of sacrifice, perseverance and patriotism can now be told within the National Park Service system. At the same time, I am so encouraged that Amache holds a special place for veterans, families, and young people as intergenerational stewards who will help interpret its history, and the lessons learned from the past. President Biden’s signature on this bill means a stronger future for us all.”

Derek Okubo, Amache descendant and Executive Director, Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships, City and County of Denver:

“Preserving and protecting the Amache site are essential factors toward the goal of telling a more complete and factual history of Colorado and our nation. In doing so, we will ensure that this stain on our nation’s constitution and past is never repeated. President Biden’s signature today means a better future for justice and equity in this country.

Kirsten Leong, Amache descendant:

“Like many in the Japanese American community, my family did not talk about incarceration, and I didn’t even know Amache was part of my family’s history until after my grandparents passed and it was too late to ask.

President Biden signing the Amache National Historic Site Act into law encourages thoughtful dialogue about the widespread intergenerational effects of incarceration that continue to shape the Japanese American experience to this day.”

Mitch Homma, Amache descendant:

“My great-grandparents were from samurai families, college educated, and started churches for the American Baptist in Japan and the U.S.A. Grandfather was a dentist with Hollywood movie stars as patients. None of that mattered—three generations of my family were detained behind barbed wire at Amache because they had Japanese faces and names. Amache is a story we cannot forget—and with President Biden signing the Amache National Historic Site Act today, we now have a chance to preserve, honor, and protect it, because it is very much a story that is alive today.”

Calvin Taro Hada, Amache descendant and President, The Japanese Association of Colorado, dba The Nikkeijin Kai of Colorado:

“Today is a momentous day. I commend President Biden for signing the Amache National Historic Site Act into law and the strong Congressional champions who believed in the promise of this bill. I am proud that the many efforts, national and regional, made to preserve Amache created a legacy that will benefit



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all Americans. Amache is past, present, and future history, and a national park designation will ensure its story will never be forgotten.”

Ken Tsukada, Amache descendant:

“With its designation as a National Historic Site, Amache will serve as a WWII memorial to honor the 120,000 individuals who served our country through incarceration and military service. My grandfather died there, my cousins were born there, and all left after “serving” the U.S. during a time of war. Amache reminds me of all those who sacrificed their lives with humble dignity and courage beyond anything I have ever had to endure. In designating Amache as a National Historic Site, America is acknowledging its mistakes and providing the descendants of the incarcerated the opportunity to fulfill many of the dreams that were stolen. We thank the collective effort of so many who have contributed to the National Historic Site designation culminating in President Biden’s signature.

Michael Takada, Chief Executive Officer, Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Amache descendant:

“My father, David Takada, along with my grandparents, Kakuji and Fumi Takada, and my uncle, Andrew Takada, were all incarcerated in Amache. They lived for decades with a sense of shame and deep emotional pain and trauma. My grandparents have passed away but my dad and uncle, 97 and 95, respectively, are fortunately alive and in relatively good health. But we have a narrow window to help heal these wounds and provide a sense of closure for them and the few remaining Amache survivors. With each day, we are losing survivors and descendants. Thanks to President Biden and the bipartisan leadership in the U.S. House and Senate for honoring those incarcerated.”

Vicki Shigekuni Wong, Amache descendant:

“The signing by President Biden of the Amache National Historic Site Act is a tribute to those, like my father, who endured the indignity and austerity of the Amache internment camp. As one of the founders of the Amache Preservation Society, he pledged to make certain that this dark period in history would not be forgotten. He always warned that ‘It could happen again.’ Our good lives, as descendants, are only possible due to the stalwart and resolute determination of those that came before us. Our deepest thanks to the leadership of Colorado Senators Bennet, Hickenlooper and Congressmen Neguse and Buck for their bipartisanship dedication in getting this bill to President Biden’s desk today. And special thanks to Tracy Coppola of the National Parks Conservation Association, for her unwavering efforts in support of our mission. Their courageous support was central to the passing of the Amache National Historic Site Act. Tough stories must be remembered, preserved, and told. Only by illuminating the dark shadows of history, can we show the way for future generations to live with the freedom and respect for all races that are essential to the survival of the American ideal and a strong democracy.”

Dr. Karen Korematsu, Founder and Executive Director, The Fred T. Korematsu Institute:



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“My father, Fred Korematsu, was an American civil rights hero who bravely resisted the Japanese American incarceration during World War II and dedicated his life to protecting the civil liberties of all people. His story resonates today as a critical example of the lifelong impacts of losing one's fundamental rights and freedoms. Now, more than ever, the lessons of history need to be learned. I commend President Biden for seeing this through.”

Stacey Sagara Shigaya, Program Director, Sakura Foundation:

“As the daughter of Japanese Americans who were forced into concentration camps during WWII, my family has been witness to racism, injustice, and generational trauma. The Amache National Historic Site is critical to accurately defining the past and honoring those who were interned by sharing their experiences. Understanding what the internees lived through will help us process the generational trauma that exists to this day. The stories of Amache, Governor Ralph Carr, and many Amache internees who still reside in Colorado are vital elements for the growth of our state, country, and generations to come.”

Jared Polis, Governor of Colorado:

“Colorado welcomes President Biden’s important action to establish the Amache site as a National Park unit, highlighting the injustices of the internment of Japanese Americans. Colorado is home to twelve world-class national park units, and adding the Amache site is an important step to preserve and protect our national history and cultural experiences, even when we are called to face dark times in our nation’s past.”

Theresa Pierno, National Parks Conservation Association President and CEO:

“It is an honor to join President Biden at the White House today to welcome Amache National Historic Site into our park system. Our national park sites include wide open wild spaces, as well as places that represent some of our country’s most important history. Not all stories they tell are easy to hear, like those of Amache, but perhaps those are the stories we as a nation need to hear most. By preserving Amache, we can ensure that as a country we confront our mistakes, honor the stories of those who were unjustly imprisoned, and protect the site for future generations. NPCA and so many others in Colorado and across the country came together with Japanese American incarceration survivors and descendants, community members, and elected officials to help make today’s victory a reality. I am proud to stand alongside many of these partners today and carry so many others with me. This is an important legacy we leave those who will come long after us.”

Argie Thrall, Jr. Mayor and Board of Trustees for the Town of Granada:

“The Town of Granada is honored that President Biden has signed the Amache National Historic Site Act to designate Amache to national park status. The preservation effort is important for the future of our town, our children, and our country. Most importantly, the national park status will honor the experiences of Amache’s survivors and generations of descendants to this day.”



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Dr. Dylan Mori, Mile High Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) President:

“Japanese American incarceration was part of the U.S. government's racist and xenophobic policies throughout history. By acknowledging this part of our past, we can continue the process of healing and reconciliation. The passage of the Amache National Historic Site Act into law will help to ensure that the history of Amache in Colorado is not forgotten.”

Former U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell:

“Today’s signature by President Biden builds on over 15 years of strong bipartisan support to preserve the Amache site. In 2006, Senators Allard and Salazar supported the designation of the site as a National Historic Landmark; during the Bush Administration, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton designated the site as an NHL; and in 2019, Senators Gardner and Bennet passed legislation to study the site as a potential new unit. By adding the site to the National Park System, the NPS will be able to tell the remarkable stories of courage and sacrifice of Japanese Americans who overcame racial prejudice to serve in the military, promote local agriculture and build businesses and religious institutions. I thank President Biden for building on this momentum and signing the bill quickly in light of the advancing age of Amache survivors and descendants and the importance of telling their stories.”

John Hopper, Amache Preservation Society and Granada School District:

“The Amache Preservation Society has always wanted to do what was best for the Japanese American families that had to endure Amache. It is for this reason that we feel that it needs to become a part of the National Park System. For the sake of our country and the future of our children, the Amache National Historic Site Act needed to become law.”

Tracy Coppola, Colorado Senior Program Manager, National Parks Conservation Association:

“We are forever grateful to President Biden, Secretary Haaland, Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper, and Congressmen Neguse and Buck for leading and supporting this critical opportunity for America to respect, honor, and heal at Amache. We honor the Amache descendants, the Amache Preservation Society, the Town of Granada, the National Park Service, and the many storytellers, historians, civil rights and military veteran groups, offices of tourism, preservation offices, county commissioners and other local elected officials who we worked alongside in seeing this through. Most of all, this moment stands on the shoulders of giants -- the Amache survivors, who, with incredible generosity and strength, have waited for this day for so long, and whose stories will now be revealed and remembered.”

Ann Burroughs, President and CEO, Japanese American National Museum and Chair of the Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium:

“We are proud to support the Amache National Historic Site Act, which reaffirms the National Park Service’s commitment to preserving and interpreting sites that convey difficult chapters in our nation’s history. The Japanese American story illustrates the rich cultural heritage of the nation spanning generations, while the incarceration of over 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry in violation of their civil



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liberties provides lessons today in learning from history and correcting our mistakes to prevent them from happening again. Because of President Biden's actions today, we can now look forward to building upon a legacy of government and community partnerships to protect Japanese American confinement sites with the designation of the Amache National Historic Site."

Janet Ito, President of Friends and Family of Nisei Veterans:

"Only in America, we are able to correct the mistakes of the historical past by learning from it, standing together and making a commitment not to repeat it again. The tragic story of wholesale internment of 120,000 persons of Japanese descent, without Constitutionally guaranteed due process, solely based on ethnicity, must be told. No doubt, one effective way to keep this history alive and to teach humanity and morality is to preserve all internment sites to help educate and instill the correct spirit of "doing what's right" so unique to this country. Friends and Family of Nisei Veterans, therefore, clearly and strongly supports the Amache National Historic Site Act to preserve the Amache site. It is timely and very much needed as America again suffers from ugly incidents of anti-Asian acts."

Michelle Magalong, PhD, president of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation:

"We commend President Biden, as well as Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper and Congressmen Neguse and Buck for their leadership on this critical and long-awaited initiative to establish the Amache National Historic Site as a unit of the National Park System. This bill is a capstone of many years of dedicated efforts by descendants of the Japanese Americans incarcerated at Amache during World War II, community groups, preservation partners, governmental agencies, and other stakeholders. In addition to extensive strategic planning and community engagement by the National Park Service with these stakeholders, in the past decade there have been numerous educational and preservation projects spearheaded by community groups, universities, and preservation partners funded by the NPS Japanese American Confinement Sites grants that demonstrate the importance of honoring and preserving this place for future generations."

Outdoor Asian Colorado Chapter:

"Amache is a living history, offering stories of survivors' incredible resilience. Presently, our AAPI communities are experiencing acts of hate, physical assault, and even murder in the United States due to racist beliefs about the COVID-19 pandemic. We must not forget the story of Amache, and the horrific mental, social, emotional, and physical repercussions of systemic racism and hatred directed towards Japanese Americans. Children of the Amache internment are now in their 80s and 90s; we must ensure that their stories are preserved in American history. Once given a National Park Service designation, Amache will be a transformative space to preserve their experiences and those of their families. With this opportunity, surviving communities can reclaim and transform a space with a horrendous history into one of education, healing, and sharing."



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Kevin Bommer, Executive Director, Colorado Municipal League:

“The Colorado Municipal League Executive Board voted unanimously to support the Amache National Historic Site Act and the amazing collaboration between all of the various groups. Local governments in the region and their outstanding partners have worked hard to secure the national park site designation, so that this important part of our nation’s history is not lost and that future generations may travel to see and learn from that history. The League is grateful for President Biden’s signature on the bill today.”

Scott Levin, Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region:

“We applaud President Biden for signing the Amache National Historic Site Act. Our generation and future generations have a moral responsibility to remember the shameful act of forcibly interning Japanese Americans and people of Japanese ancestry on American soil. The creation of a National Historic Site at Amache not only helps us remember, it provides an opportunity to confront our past to help dismantle the lingering xenophobia that allowed for internment and to nurture reconciliation and healing.”

Dawn DiPrince, Executive Director & State Historic Preservation Officer, History Colorado:

“In the quest for healing and reconciliation, History Colorado strongly supports the Amache National Historic Site Act. Preserving and protecting the Amache site is essential to remembering and interrogating the racist incarceration of Japanese Americans. A national park designation can help ensure that the truth of this traumatic history is never forgotten so we can build a just world.”

Rick Wallner, President, Board of Directors, Canyons & Plains of Southeast Colorado Regional Heritage Taskforce:

"Canyons & Plains supports the Amache National Historic Site Act. We believe the addition of Amache as a unit of the National Park System will be of great benefit to our region. In a struggling area, even pre-pandemic, having another attraction for visitors will only add to the potential for economic development and tourist dollars to help our local economies. But even more important than that, such a designation will ensure that a vital tale is told so that we may not forget both the transgressions and the will to overcome that define the story of America.”

Jane Daniels, Director of Preservation Programs, Colorado Preservation, Inc.:

“Colorado Preservation, Inc. wholeheartedly supports the Amache National Historic Site Act and celebrates today’s signature by President Biden. Nationwide hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have highlighted the need for greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in the larger historic preservation movement for which the National Park Service plays a key and leading role. Preserving and protecting Amache as part of the National Parks presents a vital opportunity to tell a more complete story of Colorado and our nation.”

Mike Murray, Chair, Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks:



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“We applaud the efforts to designate the Amache National Historic Site as the newest unit of our National Park System. The incarceration of civilians of Japanese ancestry during World War II is a dark chapter in our nation's history. But we strongly believe that Amache’s inclusion in our National Park System will help to provide the American public with more opportunities to better understand and appreciate this difficult part of our nation’s history.”

Tom Thomas, Ph.D., Sand Creek Massacre Foundation Board of Directors:

“The history of Colorado mirrors the larger context of the United States to a remarkable degree, and the Amache site is a critical resource that offers an unsparing insight into the gulf that divides the nation’s ideals from the implementation of public policies that shredded the promises guaranteed in the Constitution. Along with the nearby Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, the site of Amache reminds us that the American experience has been and remains a work in progress. Today’s signature by President Biden is a compelling statement that the nation remains committed to coming to terms with its often-contradictory history.”

Bonnie J. Clark, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology, Curator for Archaeology, University of Denver (DU) & Director, DU Amache Project:

“Amache’s location on the High Plains connects the American Heartland to Asian American Pacific Islander history. Even more, Amache connects the citizens of this country, across race and ethnicity, through its legacy—a legacy of conflict and the efforts to forge ties despite it. I strongly support the Amache National Historic Site Act to establish Amache as a unit of the National Park System and thank President Biden and Congress for seeing this through.”

Adrian Miller, Executive Director, Colorado Council of Churches:

“Today’s signature by President Biden is an important step towards acknowledging the grave injustice perpetrated towards thousands of people, primarily Japanese Americans, during the World War II era. Too often, such travesties fade from our collective memory, leaving the possibility of terrible things happening again in the future . . . even though the context and the supporting rationale may differ. We must always remind people of what happened at Amache in order to protect everyone’s freedom in the future.”

David Leaf, writer/producer/director, Professor at UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music: “As a filmmaker with a passion for issues regarding social justice, when I heard the story of Thomas Shigekuni, an Amache internee, I knew I had to make a film about him and his experiences at the camp. That documentary, *To Tell The Truth*, focused on his experience as a pre-teen Japanese American unjustly imprisoned with his family, how he (as a 12-year old!) challenged camp authorities and how after the war ended, he devoted his life to always telling the truth, to fighting for those who didn’t have a voice. Growing up in New York, despite going to “quality” schools, I had never heard of the Japanese internment. So making this film was my small contribution to memorializing the story of this shameful



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chapter in American history. And it's why the passage and signing of this legislation makes this such an important moment. It guarantees that future generations will never forget what happened at Amache."

Baca County Commissioners Glen R. Ausmus, Shiloh Freed, and Rick Butler:

"Amache becoming a National Park will preserve this historic location for years to come and would enhance tourist development efforts in Southeast Colorado where economic development is needed. President Biden's support in designating Amache as a national park through the Amache National Historic Site Act is greatly appreciated."

Dr William Wei, Professor of History, University of Colorado Boulder and Member, Reenvisioning Denver's Historic Chinatown Project:

"Protecting Amache is needed more than ever as the American government has once again engaged in unconstitutional imprisonment and carried out prejudicial policies and practices based on race and national origin. I am hopeful the Amache National Historic Site Act is now law. Making Amache a national park site is one of the best investments the country can make in its future."